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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

a-brac which enlivens the exposed interior on the top shelf of the little cupboard or cabinet—that is, unless you prefer—and I would scarcely blame you—in the medallion on your furniture and hangings on your walls some of the pretty Parisiennes of Duez, or something in the type of the lightest cosmopolitan taste, signed James Tissot.

For the etagère of the vestibule of the first floor, of which we give an illustration (Fig. 17), the most prominent decorative feature is a bunch of wild grapes in wrought iron or copper, or in green bronze which is applied to the doors of the cabinet. The ornamentation is finished always in harmony with the tone of the wood chosen by the portières, if blue, green or brown, by the multi-colored or crystal glass, bronzes, or statuettes in light colored metal. In the varied decorations the resulting scale of color should never be lost sight of.

For the ceiling of the vestibule we use a trellis work of lattice in light wood (Fig. 18), which, combined with a ground of painted foliage produces a charming suggestion of an Italian arbor, and of the country and pure air. The ornamental border of this ceiling should be on two sides a branch of brier in beaten copper. The other two sides extending length-wise are decorated by a vermicular design in copper wire, with pendants in repoussé copper.

The trellis of wood which we have recommended for the ceiling of the vestibule is made in a variety of geometric figures, etc., by the Japanese. They offer almost an infinite variety of combinations. With us only the monotonous lozenge form of trellis is known, and we can scarcely realize the number of new outlines and designs which may be produced from a small number of motifs, suitable for borders for mural decorations, for ceilings and even for settings for our mirrors and pictures of all dimensions. It is these trellises and interlacings and vermicular designs that we wish to utilize in decorating the modern house. We have only to open our eyes and look around us to discover the germs of thousands of new motifs.

In his wonderful work, "l'Insecte," Michelet, who made some curious investigations, and for whom the history of man alone did not suffice, has a suggestive page on the rehabilitation of art by observation of other organisms. Design and colors both should be revived from observation of insects, plants, shellfish, and even mollusks.

"The most charming forms are furnished by the great artists of instinct, in the living forms around us. Draw a drop of blood, observe it under a microscope. This drop, in spreading out, presents to you a delightful arborescence, with all the delicacy and lightness shown in certain trees in win-

ter, when they reveal their real shapes, not hidden by leaves."

Here we have an inexhaustible source of vermicular ornamentation.

And elsewhere: "There is an insect which, neither by day nor by night, to the naked eye or under the microscope excites interest; but if you will take the trouble to raise the scales which compose its thick scaly wings with a delicate and patient scalpel you will frequently find unexpected designs concealed beneath, like the perfect curves of vegetation, of delicate palms, perfect angular striated figures like hieroglyphics, which recall the alphabets of certain Oriental languages." Behold the Renaissance of an arabesque ornamentation!

Following out this prolific principle, we should demand in turn from flowers, leaves, butterflies, shells, the anemones of the sea and the most minute forms, the secrets of their colors and tints, of the radiations and striations which nature has produced in their forms, and of their convolutions, that we may see the colors and outlines in all the decoration of our house, giving to it a character of absolute novelty, drawn from a source at once the most antique and most marvellously young and one accessible to all nature!

(To be Continued.)

## AMERICAN VERSUS EUROPEAN HOUSES.

BY MRS. S. B. PUTNAM.

A FEW months abroad furnishes many new ideas in regard to house furnishing. It is fair to say that, as a rule, and the different classes of society considered, the people of our own country live more comfortably than those of any other country. A competency is more easily attained in America than elsewhere, and the lack of the present class, which, among European nations represent so large a portion of the population, with the possibilities of arriving at better and more ex-

alted position encourages in the minds of our people, first, perhaps, an ambition for a more careful education and then an improvement in the methods of living. Our educational system furnishing an opportunity, the farmer of small means, and the tradesman, with their early scant successes, are hardly content to live quite as their fathers did, or that their children's aspirations shall be confined within the narrow limits of the aspirations of their ancestors.

With education there comes improvement of taste, and in nothing is this more evident than in the appointments of living. Carpets and curtains—the refurnishing of the cupboard, and many small needs, not imagined in ignorance of the comfort or the pleasure afforded in them, suggest themselves and the ren-

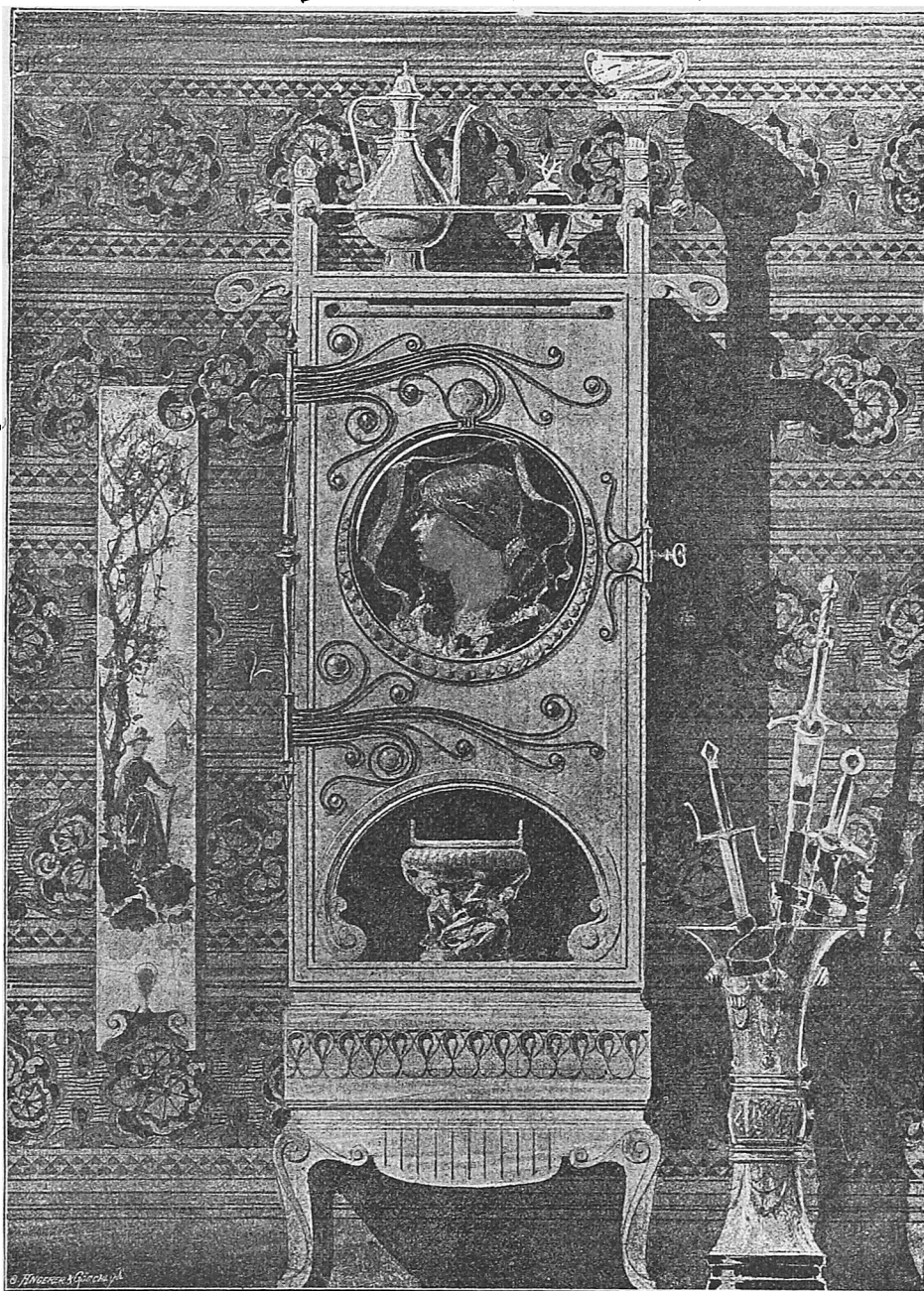


FIG. 16.—A. CABINET IN THE MAIN VESTIBULE.

dering of the home more attractive, becomes a darling object.

In the social conditions which obtain in European countries this is often as impossible as it is impracticable. The peasant born, in most instances, remains a peasant for life—the simple pleasures and comforts enjoyed by his ancestors being deemed by him not only all that he requires, but all to which he is entitled or which he deserves. Thus the home of the peasant of to-day, is what the home of the peasant was a century ago; and unless conditions change for the peasant class, it is what the home of his descendants will be for generations. The instances in which the peasant emerges from the circumstances under which he was born are rare, and the result of extraordinary opportunities or of extraordinary genius. Thus the home of the peasant is of the simplest and of the rudest description. There is little to be looked for of taste or of comfort, beneath the thatched roofs of the peasantry of Northern Europe, or the tiled roofs of the peasant's homes of Middle and Southern Europe; although the peasantry of France gave to their country a Millet; and to the peasantry of Middle Europe as artisans and embroiderers, we are indebted for many of our most choice luxuries in dress, and our most dainty adornments in jewelry, and certain articles in house-furnishing.

But it is not from the homes of the peasantry, that we can expect to derive hints in regard to the appointments of the home, in however humble a sphere the home may be. The home that is the castle to the European is that which is found in the middle and higher classes, ranging up to the nobility. In many of these we find treasures of

art that can scarcely be imagined in a country in which treasures of art are as rare as they are yet in America; and in all of them, it may be said, we find more or less to admire, or to surprise us. But the most of them, it must be said, are singularly destitute of comfort, as regarded by American ideas of comfort. Fuel, we are told, is, in England, one of the most expensive of the domestic necessities, yet in the house-furnishing we find little judgment exercised in providing for cold weather. Hard wood floors in pretentious houses are, it is said, well nigh universal, and the means of heating inadequate. No one can look through the long stretches of luxurious apartments in Windsor or Warwick Castles, without a sense of their extreme discomfort in the winter season, dependent as they are on the present methods of heating. In the great state dining-hall, at

Warwick Castle, there may be seen an immense grate fifteen feet in length, filled with billets and knots of wood wherewith to feed a fire-place so wide that an ox might be roasted before it. In front of the fire-place is laid a sumptuous Oriental carpet, or large rug, and around are luxurious sofas, divans and fauteils; and this, we are told is the living-room, when the Earl is dispensing hospitalities to a chosen party of guests. But we cannot dissuade ourselves that, while the faces of the host and his guests are parching their backs may be chilly, if not freezing with cold, highly polished floors in the background, snow on the park, and skating on the Avon.

Polished wood floors, with rugs or mats, laid here and there upon needed spots, seem to be the rule in the building and house furnishing, in both England and France, the polished wood giving way in Southern Europe, to the still more chilly floors of marble or cement, delightful for summer, but far from

pleasant in winter. In this feature of house furnishing, begging pardon of those of our country women who incline latterly to polished wood floors, or Chinese matting and woolen rugs, we like better for the cold season the carpet which covers every inch of space upon which the feet are called to rest. And we doubt not an experience in Europe, during a winter of weather as severe as was the weather of last winter, would greatly multiply the advocates in America for fully and warmly carpeted floors.

Oil-cloth is also in general and conspicuous use in Europe, although to a great extent a floor covering of the past in America. It continues in full force for

hall carpeting and the oil-cloth mat in front of the wash-stand and the toilet-table is seen everywhere. It is needless to add, in that, while conducive in a certain sense to tidiness in the appointments of the *ménage*, and an economical appurtenance in the dressing-room, the oil-cloth mat is by no means conducive to comfort, while far from being either handsome or stylish. We like far better for the purpose understood, the plaited woolen and other home-made rugs of our American ladies; which we consider far preferable, on the score both of appearance and comfort, the rugs and mats of domestic manufacture, in imitation of those Smyrna and other Oriental cities. Did we furnish for summer only, or were ours, in all parts, semi-tropical climate, we might much more heartily approve of the methods of carpeting in Europe. But considering the character of our climate,

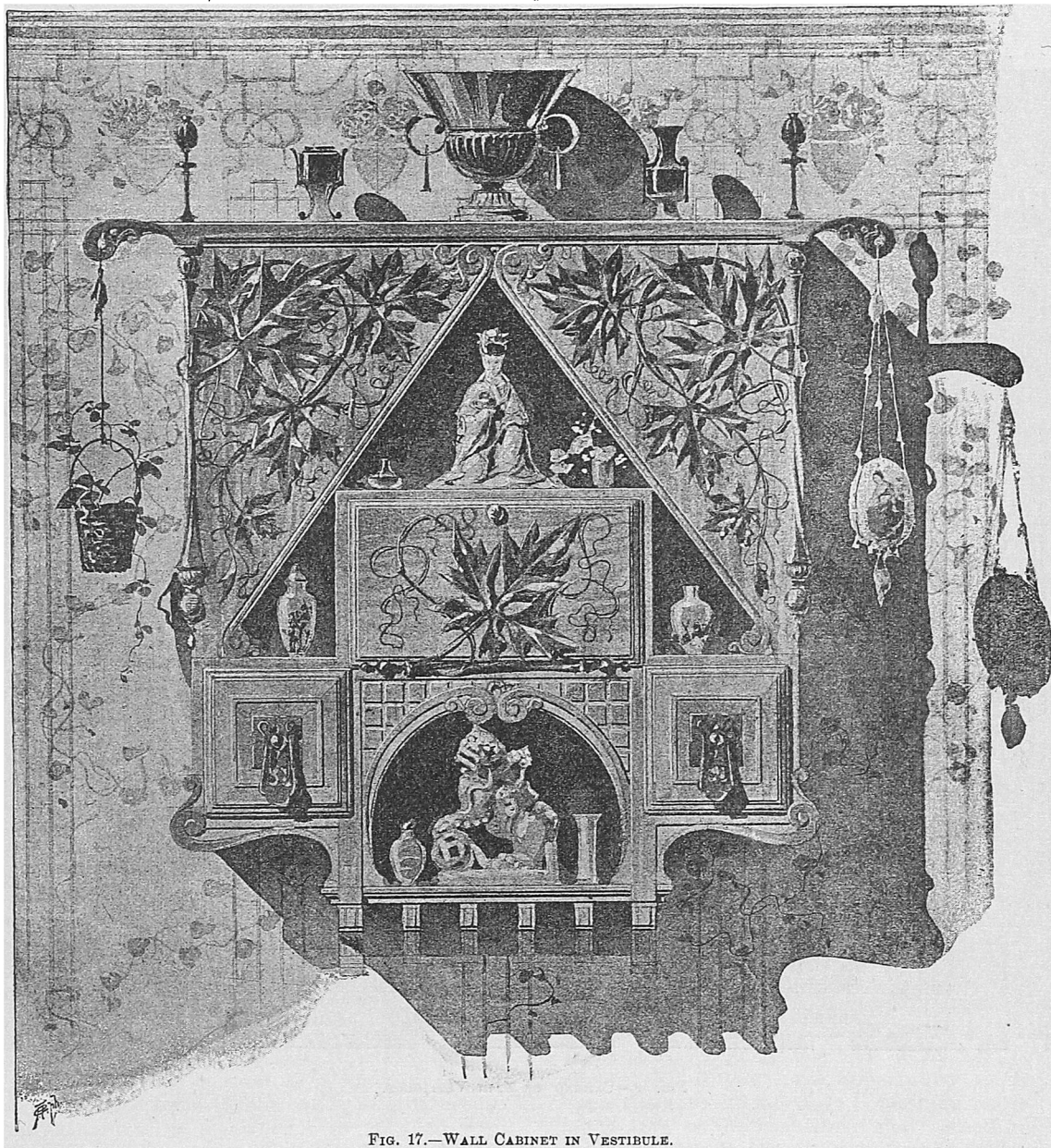


FIG. 17.—WALL CABINET IN VESTIBULE.



especially in the Northern, Middle and the more Northern of the Western States, with the constitutional tendencies of our people, we can but deprecate the following of a fashion which is conducive to convenience rather than to health; or at least to the health of the American people. It may be, however, that we take too great care of our health, in the over-heating and the furnishing of our houses; for, certain it is, that Americans are generally far less robust than the English, and capable of much less endurance than the French.

But *sans* the hot air, the steam pipes, the stoves and other heating arrangements of American houses, the English give feather-beds; and were it not that they furnish also linen sheets, for the coldest weather in winter, we would be forced to admit—though sadly against our will—that the feather bed is a luxury that cannot be too highly praised. This conclusion, doubtless, is the result of the comfort experienced in the feather beds of the insufficiently heated chambers in which we sometimes found

the ceiling from which the curtains are suspended. The style of making the bed-curtains is simple. If the bedstead is furnished with the tester, the curtains are sometimes only a ruffle, from eighteen to twenty inches deep; or in addition to the ruffle, which extends across the foot and about half way around the sides, there are deep breadths that sweep around the head of the bed, to the floor, gracefully looped back. When the curtains are suspended from a canopy, there are the deep breadths at the side, and a lambrequin arrangement across the front. The windows are curtained to match the bed, the cretonne draperies sweeping over lace draperies, with the linen shades of America conspicuous by their absence.

Rarely do we find in European bed-rooms the sets of standing furniture to which we are accustomed in America. A plain chest of drawers, with a dressing table supplied with a mirror, and a plain table supplied with a double set of chamber ware, is the usual furniture. In England and in France, the bed-room

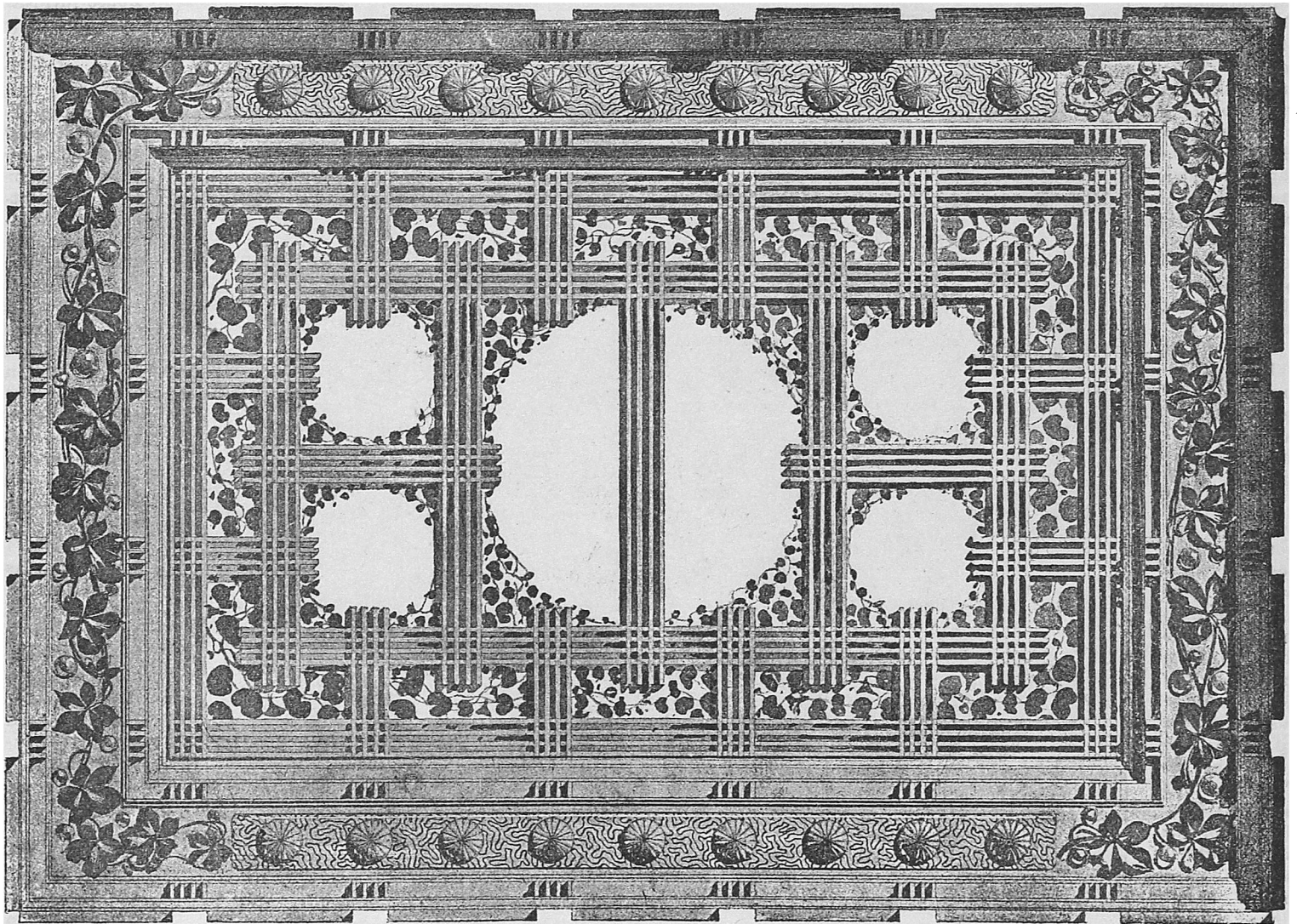


FIG. 18.—CEILING OF MAIN VESTIBULE.

lodging; and while, in consideration of health, the feather-bed has long been condemned by the medical fraternity of our own country, we do not wonder that it still obtains in English homes. In France we find very delightful hair-mattresses and spring-beds, while lack of warmth in the bed-chambers is atoned for by the down quilt, which is an almost inevitable addendum of a French sleeping apartment; and in Southern Europe we find beds stuffed with cotton and cotton pillows.

Yet withal, we find in the bed-chambers of both England and France, an air of elegance and sumptuousness that is often sadly lacking in the American methods of furnishing. Lacquered brass, and iron wire bedsteads seem to be in the highest favor, and although not intrinsically, generally very elegant in effect, the bed is rendered cosy, if not truly sumptuous, by the curtains which overhang it. And much use is made of *crêtonne*. The bedstead is furnished with a tester, from which depend the curtains, or there is a canopy fastened to the wall or attached to

is heated from a small grate; while in Southern Europe the heating arrangement is a small porcelain or cast-iron stove, which is placed in one corner of the room, with a singular aptitude for sending all the warmth it engenders up the pipe instead of outside.

## A ROMANESQUE SUITE OF CHAMBER FURNITURE.

BY A CASUAL CONTRIBUTOR.

THE design of chamber furniture on page 56, is for a suite to be made in oak or mahogany in the spirit of the Romanesque, simple and easily constructed. The lines of the bedstead are unique and a treatment of inlay on the headboard would not be out of place; in which case strips of the same should be used on the posts and around panels and drawer fronts.